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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICANT : SKLAR et al.
U.S. APPLICATION NO. : 10/021,243
FILING DATE : December 19, 2001
TITLE : Microfluidic Micromixer
GROUP ART UNIT : 1641
EXAMINER : Ann Y. LAM

Mail Stop Amendment
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Response to Restriction Requirement

In response to the Examiner's office action dated September 21, 2004, pursuant to the Examiner's restriction requirement in the above-referenced patent application, Applicants provisionally elect with traverse to prosecute the invention of group I, consisting of claims 1-50 which are drawn to a microfluidic mixing apparatus. In the alternative, and in the interest of an efficient examination of this application, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to give consideration to examining all of the claims of the instant application, namely claims 1-78 together for purposes of expediting prosecution of the present application. Withdrawal of the restriction requirement is respectfully requested.

Notwithstanding Applicants' election, Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's requirement for restriction. Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner reconsider his restriction requirement. Applicant respectfully submits that prosecution of all of the originally filed claims should not be restricted to the elected invention, for the reasons which are set forth hereinbelow.

According to MPEP § 803, restriction by the Examiner of patentably distinct inventions is proper if the claimed inventions are independent and a *serious burden* would be placed on the Examiner if restriction was not required. Applicant respectfully submits that the presentation of all of the originally filled claims would not place such a serious burden on the Examiner as to

require restriction. All of the originally filed claims are directed to related, though patentably distinct products (microfluidic mixer) or methods (mixing materials) having a common general utility .

Although the claimed invention groups are generally patentably distinct from each other, Applicant respectfully submits that any search the Examiner would need to conduct in examining the instant application would not be *unduly* burdensome. That does not mean that significant effort will not have to be expended by the Examiner to search and examine all of the originally filed claims, it is just that the burden will not be so severe as to require/support restriction. Moreover, the examination of all of the originally filed claims in the instant application would not place such a serious burden on the Examiner as to require restriction. Furthermore, the claims are not absolutely segregated into groups I and II, there being some overlap of content in the two groups.

Applicants understand the general policy considerations for the Patent Office's requirement for restriction in certain instances. In this instance, however, those considerations do not weigh in favor of restricting the inventions here. In determining the appropriateness of restriction, one must also consider the countervailing consideration that, in each instance, Applicant wishes the Patent Office to examine his or her application with a certain degree of "administrative efficiency" and wishes to have patent claims issue which reflect the breadth of his or her invention.

Applicants respectfully submit that the originally filed claims are sufficiently narrow to allow the Examiner to determine patentability without being subjected to the serious burden referred to in MPEP § 803. Consequently, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the restriction requirement in its entirety.

However, in the event that the Examiner determines to maintain the restriction requirement, Applicants respectfully submit that the election of invention group I, claims 1-50, drawn to a microfluidic mixing apparatus is sufficient for purposes of examining the present application.

The Examiner is cordially requested to call the undersigned attorney if the Examiner believes that a telephonic discussion may materially advance the prosecution of the instant application in any way. No fee is due for the presentation of this response.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 

Henry D. Coleman
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Dated: September 30, 2004

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: "Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450" on October 7, 2004.


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